

Professional Pathways for Teachers (PPfT) Perception Survey Results

Fall 2019

Introduction

This report describes results from the Professional Pathways for Teachers (PPfT) Staff Perceptions Survey. The purpose of the survey was to provide information for stakeholders to gain an understanding of the implementation and impact of the PPfT program following the third year after launch. Of particular interest were teachers' perceptions of the different program components of PPfT (e.g. student learning objectives [SLOs], the PPfT appraisal system, PPfT compensation). Stakeholders were also interested in whether or not teachers felt the appraisal rating system was fair and accurate, whether they understood how the various components of PPfT worked, and whether they understood how PPfT could potentially affect their salaries. The results in this report may provide guidance for program administrators on implementation and delivery, based on input from the population affected.

What is PPfT?

PPfT launched district-wide in Austin Independent School District (AISD), in the 2016–2017 school year to empower teachers and improve the quality of teaching through a multi-measure appraisal and compensation system. A secondary emphasis of the program was to help retain quality teachers and improve student outcomes. Each year since its inception, new components have been added. For example, offering professional learning opportunities to teachers is a new component. One of these opportunities is the option to enroll in leadership pathways (LPs). In LPs, teachers learn about a specific topic important to district initiatives (i.e., transformative technology, social -and -emotional learning, and literacy). Another new opportunity is the option to enroll in professional development units (PDUs), whereby teachers self-organize into collaborative research teams to answer an education -based research question and produce a report by the end of the school year.

For the program implementation and outcomes to be continually monitored, the AISD Department of Research and Evaluation (DRE) has provided evaluation and support. DRE support includes data collection, analysis, validation of appraisal methods, measurement of student outcomes, and education of stakeholders.

Results of the 2019 PPfT Staff Perception Survey

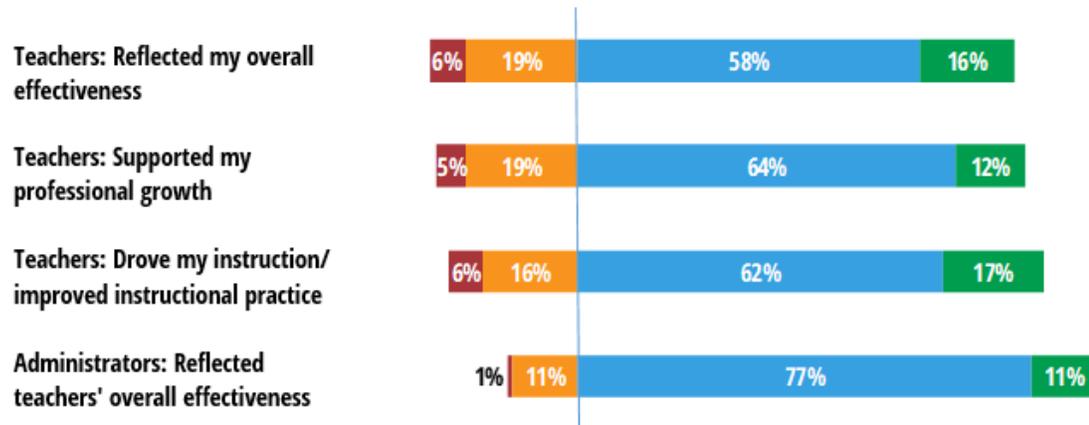
What were teachers' overall perceptions of PPfT?

Overall, AISD teachers responded favorably to questions regarding their overall perceptions of PPfT appraisal. For example, 74% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that their rating reflected their overall effectiveness as a professional. Similarly, 76% strongly agreed or agreed that the components of PPfT appraisal supported their professional growth and 79% believed the PPfT feedback they received drove their instruction and improved their

instructional practice. A slightly higher percentage (88%) of administrators strongly agreed or agreed that the PPfT appraisal rating reflected the overall effectiveness of the teachers on their campus (Figure 1). Teachers most frequently chose PPfT as what most contributed to their voice and choice (n = 696), their professional growth as a teacher leader (n = 930), and the quality of their teaching (n = 1,003). Other choices included: compensation, LPs, and PDUs.

Figure 1

Teachers **strongly agreed** or **agreed** their appraisal rating reflected their overall effectiveness, supported professional growth, and drove instruction/improved instructional practice. A higher percentage of administrators than of teachers **strongly agreed** or **agreed** the appraisal rating reflected overall effectiveness. Fewer teachers and administrators **disagreed** or **strongly disagreed**.



Source. PPfT Perceptions Survey data, fall 2019.

How did teachers perceive the PPfT components?

Most teachers who responded to the questions had favorable perceptions of the instructional practice (IP), and professional growth and responsibilities (PGR) components. Ninety percent of teachers strongly agreed or agreed their IP rating was based on observable evidence from the rubric, and 84% believed that their IP rating reflected their actual instructional practice. Also, the majority of teachers (88%) believed their PGR rating reflected their professionalism and campus involvement (Figure 2). These findings indicate most teachers were satisfied that their PPfT appraisals were fair, clear, and based on objective evidence. This answered an important evaluation question, since other research showed teachers' perceptions of their performance rating can be either a hindrance or an incentive in their growth (Dal Corso, De Carlo, Carluccio, Girardi, & Falco, 2019).

Methodology

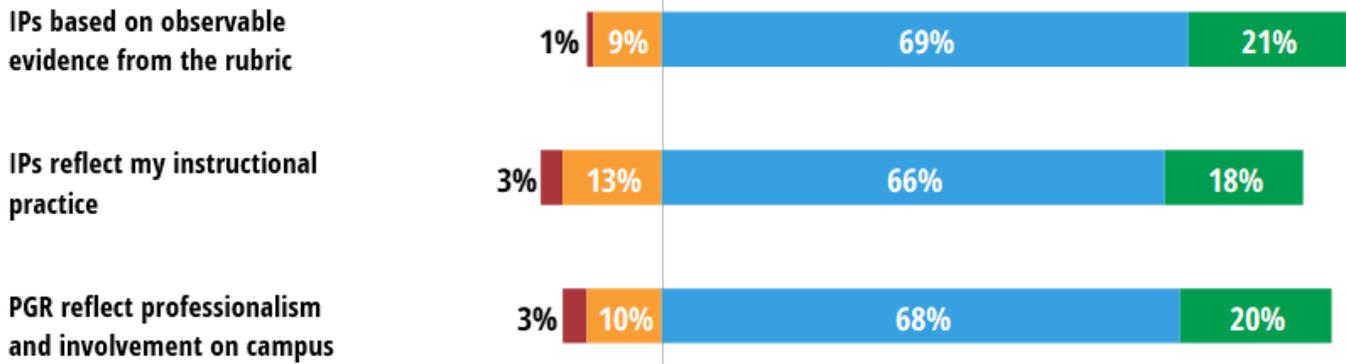
In December 2019 through early January 2020, the PPfT staff perceptions survey was sent to all teachers in AISD who were at least half time employees (n = 5,895). Because stakeholders were interested in feedback from staff who administered or scored the appraisals, the survey was also sent to 336 administrators.

Forty-three percent of staff members responded to the survey (n = 2,511). Certain sections of the survey were relevant only to teachers who participated in that particular component of PPfT; therefore, the questions in those sections were only displayed to those teachers. Similarly, only questions pertaining to administrators were displayed to those staff members (see Figure 4 and 8).

Reports available on the DRE website (<https://www.austinisd.org/dre>) provide more background information about validation of DRE evaluation methods and about 2018–2019 PPfT results (see DeBaylo, Hutchins, Leung, Looby, & Minney, 2019; Hutchins, 2019).

Figure 2

The majority of teachers **strongly agreed** or **agreed** the IP component was based on observable evidence, and reflected their instructional practice, and PGR reflected their professionalism and involvement on campus. Fewer teachers **disagreed** or **strongly disagreed**.

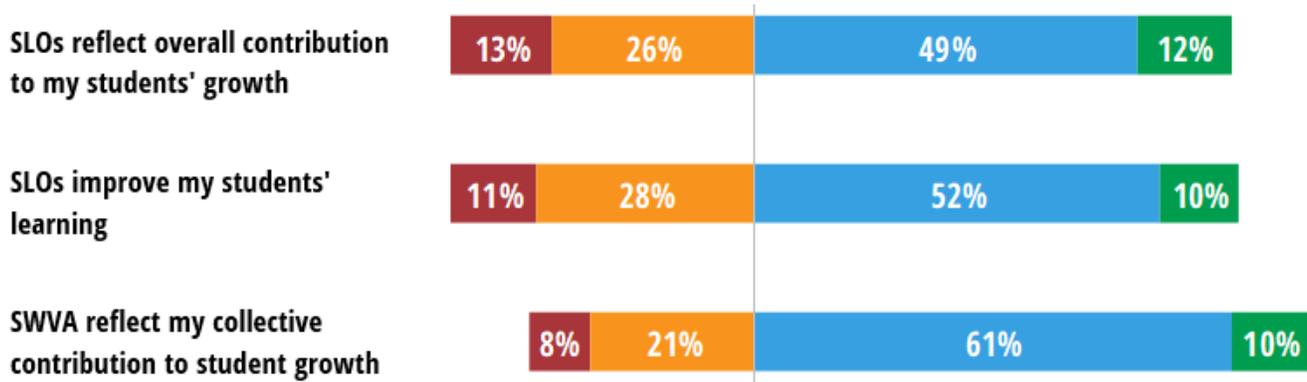


Source. PPfT Perceptions Survey data, fall 2019.

Teachers also responded favorably about the SLO and school-wide value-added (SWVA) components, although not quite as favorably as they did to the IP and PGR components. Sixty-one percent of teachers strongly agreed or agreed their SLO reflected their overall contribution to student growth, and 62% reported the SLO process improved their students' learning outcomes, whereas 71% believed SWVA reflected their collective contribution to student growth on campus (Figure 3).

Figure 3

More teachers **strongly agreed** or **agreed** the SWVA component reflected the collective contribution to student growth on campus than **strongly agreed** or **agreed** their SLOs reflected their overall contribution to student growth and improved their student learning outcomes. Fewer teachers **disagreed** or **strongly disagreed**.

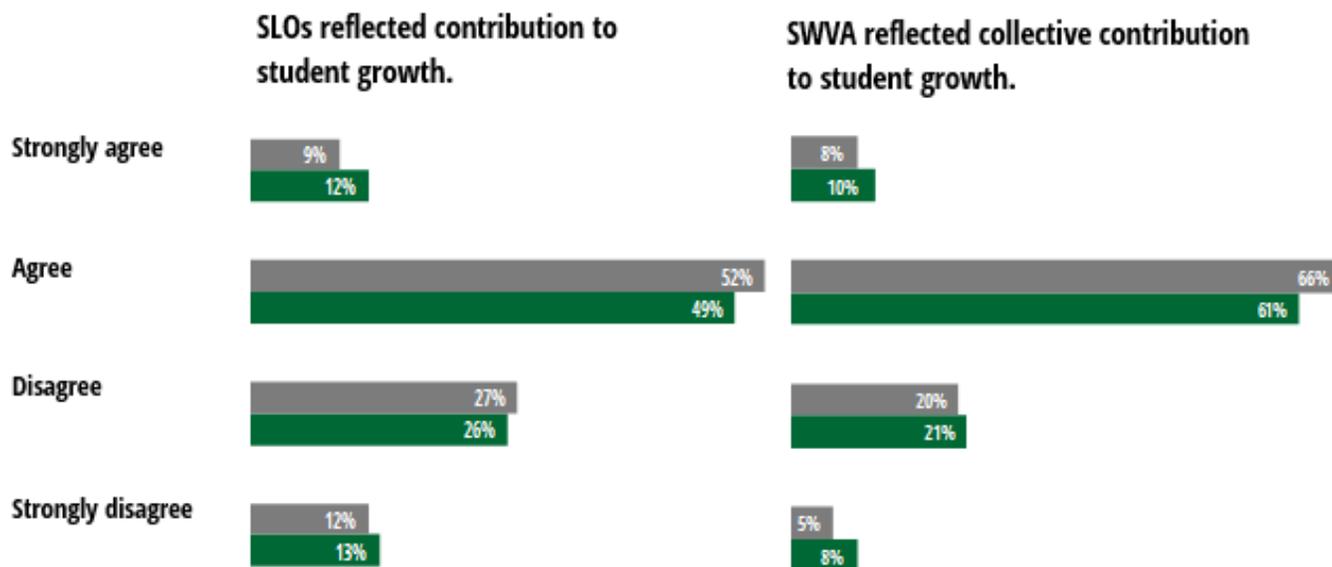


Source. PPfT Perceptions Survey data, fall 2019.

Notably, administrators' perceptions seemed to be consistent with teachers' perceptions about SLOs and SWVA. Sixty-one percent of administrators, as well as 61% of teachers, strongly agreed or agreed SLOs reflected teachers' overall contribution to student growth. Seventy-four percent of administrators, and 71% of teachers believed that SWVAs reflected teachers' collective contribution to student growth (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Administrators and **teachers** reported similar perceptions of SLOs and SWVAs. More of both administrators and **teachers** (see Figure 3), strongly agreed or agreed that SWVAs reflected contributions to student growth than did SLOs.



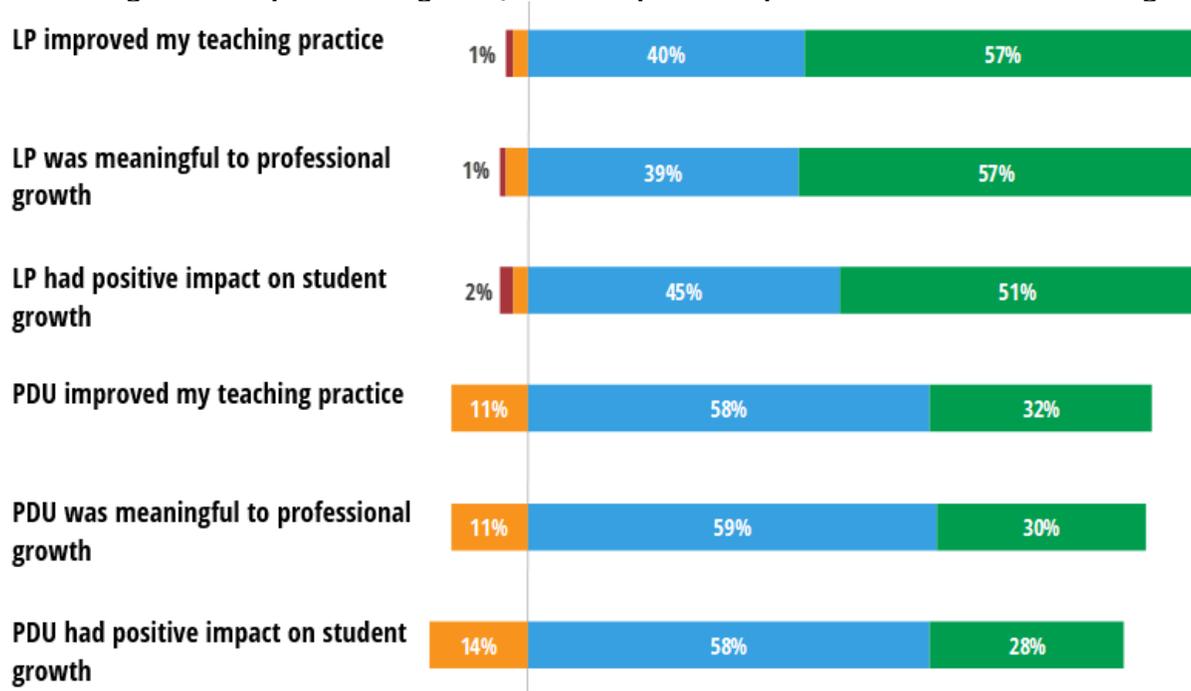
Source. PPfT Perceptions Survey data, fall 2019.

What were teachers' perceptions of LPs and PDUs?

Overall, teachers who participated in PPfT compensation and who participated in either a LP or a PDU responded favorably about their experiences. A higher percentage of teachers responded favorably about LPs than responded favorably about PDUs. Ninety-eight percent of teachers in a LP reported they had implemented what they had learned, whereas 90% of teachers in a PDU reported they implemented what they learned. Also, 97% of teachers in a LP and 90% of teachers in a PDU reported it improved their teaching practice. Ninety-six percent of teachers in a LP and 89% of teachers in a PDU reported the experience was meaningful to their professional growth. Lastly, 96% of teachers in a LP and 86% of teachers in a PDU reported it had positive impact on their students' academic growth (Figure 5)

Figure 5

More teachers in LPs than teachers in PDUs **strongly agreed** or **agreed** the experience improved their teaching practice, was meaningful to their professional growth, and had a positive impact on their students' academic growth



Also noteworthy, in the block of questions about LPs and PDUs, there was a reversal of the trend for more respondents to answer “agree” than any other response. On all but one of the questions, teachers were more likely to answer “strongly agree” than any other response, indicating the participants in LPs were more likely to have strong, positive perceptions (Figure 6).

Figure 6

More teachers in LPs responded “strongly agree” than any other response choice, whereas fewer teachers in PDUs responded “strongly agree” than “agree.” This is a reversal of overall trend in other survey questions where most common response was “agree.”



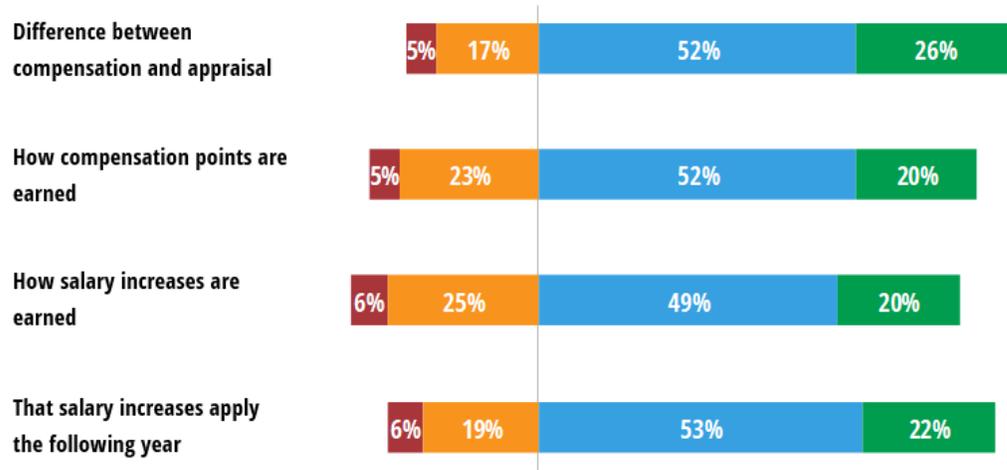
Source. PPfT Perceptions Survey data, fall 2019.

How well do teachers and administrators understand how PPfT works?

High percentages of teachers reported they understood various components of PPfT. The majority (78%) reported they understood the difference between PPfT compensation and appraisal, how PPfT compensation points were earned (71%), how salary increases were earned (69%), and that salary increases are applied the following year (75%). Despite the high percentage of teachers who reported they understood the above aspects of PPfT compensation, 26% of teachers (n = 525) responded they ‘did not know’ if they were in PPfT compensation. This implies a discrepancy between teachers’ actual understanding and their perception of their understanding. These incongruences could indicate further efforts are needed to communicate all programming aspects of PPfT (Figure 7).

Figure 7

The majority of teachers **strongly agreed** or **agreed** they understand the difference between PPfT compensation and appraisal, how compensation points and salary increases are earned, and that salary increases are applied the following year. Fewer teachers **disagreed** or **strongly**

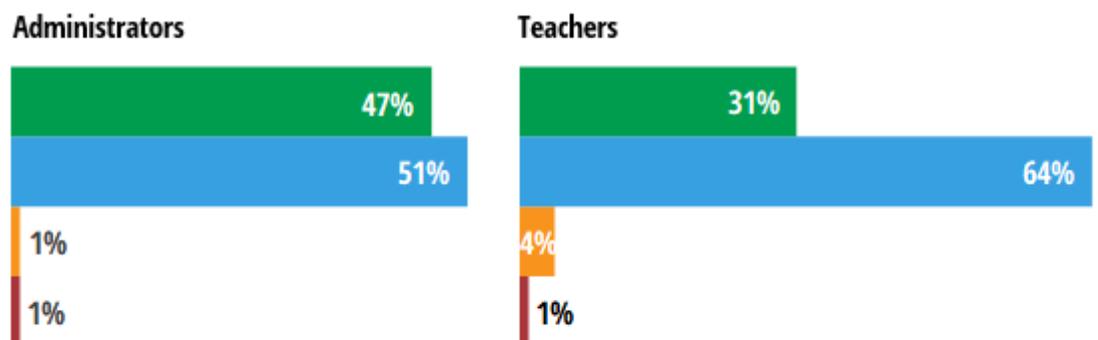


Source. PPfT Perceptions Survey data, fall 2019

Responses from teachers and administrators on how well they understood the PPfT appraisal process were comparable. Ninety-six percent of teachers reported totally or moderately understanding the components of PPfT, and 95% reported totally or moderately understanding how these components factored into their final rating. A small percentage of teachers showed a lack of knowledge about various components of PPfT. For example, 26% of teachers did not know whether they had opted into PPfT compensation or not, 41% reported they did not know if they had to remain a teacher in order to get PPfT dollars, and many teachers (n = 107) reported they had not opted into PPfT compensation because they did not know how. Ninety-eight percent of administrators reported understanding how the components factored into teachers' final ratings (Figure 8). However, little more than half (53%) of administrators felt confident they could educate teachers on PPfT compensation.

Figure 8

The majority of teachers and administrators **totally** or **moderately** understood how the PPfT components factored into teachers' final ratings. More administrators than teachers reported they **totally** understood. Fewer teachers and administrators **slightly** or **didn't** understand.



Source. PPfT Perceptions Survey data, fall 2019

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Findings

The response rate from staff (43%) indicated the survey helped stakeholders reach their implementation goal of gathering formative evidence directly from participants in the program. These results provided actionable information to begin identifying initial outcomes and adjust program implementation if needed. In addition, future analysis of the qualitative data collected from respondents who answered unfavorably (i.e., disagree or strongly disagree) may reveal useful information.

The majority of teacher respondents reported their scores reflected their practice and were based on an objective rubric. It appears these respondents found the rating system to be fair. Administrators seemed to corroborate this finding, with the majority also reporting they felt the appraisals accurately reflected their teachers' professionalism and instructional practice. PPfT also seemed to contribute to teachers' feelings of empowerment and to improve the quality of their teaching, as it was designed to do. Most teachers reported PPfT appraisal was what most contributed to their voice and choice, their professional growth as a teacher leader, and the quality of their teaching.

Survey results indicated a lack of understanding by both teachers and staff about PPfT compensation. Therefore, staff may need clarification in the implementation and training process. Areas of misunderstanding included how to opt into PPfT compensation, how to determine whether they had opted in already, and whether they had to remain a teacher to receive their salary increases. Additionally, nearly half (47%) of administrators did not feel confident explaining PPfT compensation to teachers. Further inquiry is necessary to determine what can be done to improve communication about PPfT compensation.

The majority of both teachers and administrators had positive responses about other aspects of PPfT. Teachers most frequently chose compensation as the reason they wanted to stay a teacher in AISD (with the exception of the response "none of these reasons"). This would seem to support the secondary goal of PPfT to retain quality teachers. The majority of teachers and administrators felt that student outcomes were positively affected by the PPfT appraisal system and LP and PDU components. This also addresses the secondary goal of PPfT (i.e., improve student outcomes).

Recommendations

Although the 43% response rate was a substantial portion of teachers and administrators, the responses only represented a portion of staff members affected by the PPfT program. For this reason, future efforts may be made to increase the response rate. Because almost 100% of teachers who participated in LPs responded to the survey, it could be interesting to find out why this group had such a high response rate, while other sub-groups (i.e., administrators) had a response rate of less than half the population (47%). In short, the perceptions of the administrators and teachers are a crucial part of the implementation process, and therefore continuous efforts will be made to collect, analyze, and report on these valuable perceptions.

References

Dal Corso, L., De Carlo, A., Carluccio, F., Girardi, D., & Falco, A. (2019). An opportunity to grow or a label? Performance appraisal justice and performance appraisal satisfaction to increase teachers' well-being. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 1-9.

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